



ALL ROADS

Excellent metropolitan markets, combined with open space for maneuverability, make the Jersey Meadows the prime transportation area in the east. This story, sixth in a series, discusses the work of trainmen and truckers in the marshes.

DRIVING across the Jersey Meadows at times can create the illusion of being in a weird forest, where the "trees" are the thick concrete trunks which lift their lofty arms to hold roadbeds high above the sodden ground. Beneath, on the "forest" floor, railroad tracks spread through the foxtails like intertwined serpents.

Then, as the concrete forest is left behind, the traveler is confronted by a series of "Chinese walls" formed by railroads consolidating their way across the marshes for 125 years. Sometimes the walls are pierced, and the traveler drives under or through and at other times the roadways boost the visitor over the railbeds.

Everywhere in the meadowland there is movement. Trucks grind across the roads, threading in and out of the maze with a massive sureness that intimidates a mere autoist caught in the traffic cricles beneath the bridges and skyways. Trains shuttle across the marshes — sometimes sleek and modern, as Washington or Chicago specials; more often drab and efficient, as little four or five-car freight drills moving in and out of industrial sidings.

Out in that marsh where tides once washed freely, man has built the most intense transportation complex ever known, to serve the most concentrated and richest population in the United States. At this moment, something you will use tomorrow almost surely is being readied for you in the meadows: in train yards, in truck terminals or in airport and dockside warehouses.

MAN lives not alone by having his goods carried to him; he does a good bit of moving himself—and nowhere does he move more ceaselessly or

Every major Eastern railroad uses meadowland acres for freight yards, and nearly a million tons move through them every week. Air view is of the Erie's Croxton Yard, 112-tracks wide, on island just east of Snake Hill. Smaller yard, upper left, is Lackawanna Railroad's Secaucus Yard.

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

LEAD to the MEADOWS

World's Most Intense Transportation Complex—Land, Sea and Air—Gives the Marshland Movement All Its Own

in greater numbers than across the meadows.

Traditionally (for a century) he has traversed the open flatland on trains. The train-window view of the Jersey Meadows unquestionably is more familiar to millions of Americans and visitors from foreign lands than the Grand Canyon of Colorado. The sharp-eyed can see the birds, the goldenrod or an occasional muskrat trapper. Most turn to their papers, often without giving Snake Hill as much as a second glance.

Officials of meadowland railroads candidly declare that they no longer find moving people attractive or profitable. The open mouths of the Holland and Lincoln tunnels have deepened their pessimism by changing travel habits from train seat to automobile seat.

Death of one carrier at the hands of another is in the best historical custom of the meadowland, where the open spaces belong to those with the most imagination and money. After all, the railroads themselves killed stages and wagon routes across the meadows in the 1840s and 1850s. Stages and wagons, in turn, had killed small boat traffic on the creeks.

HUMANS aren't dead yet on meadows rail lines, although railroad brass keep setting vague dates for the wake. Thousands of people each day use trains to maneuver across the meadows (in both directions at all times, to the possible surprise of those who think that people travel only east in the morning and west at night). These add up to millions annually; the demise of passenger traffic on the meadows will be a big obituary.

Opening of the tunnels in the 1920s and 1930s began the knell for rail passengers, and the completion of the New Jersey Turnpike in 1951—high above mere railroads—quicken an awareness of the victim for whom the bell tolled.

Railroads and the spreading highway web came into dramatically close juxtaposition at Snake Hill in 1949 and 1950, when engineers were blasting a pathway on the edge of the hill

for the turnpike. So many Erie and Pennsylvania trains constantly passed the base of the huge rock outcropping that engineers found only one period all day when they had more than a five-minute interval to blast. That was at 4:30 p.m., and then only 15 minutes could be found to explode dynamite, clear the track and get off the rails before another train whistled through.

If the train passenger becomes increasingly undesirable on the meadows, freight continues to get a royal welcome out where the marsh grass

Vantage Point

The intense transportation complex of the Jersey Meadows is most evident in the two or three square miles of meadows (and former meadows) centered on Port Newark and Newark Airport. This is where airport, docks, railroads and highways meet in unique fashion. Paul Busse, executive director of the Newark Economic Development Council, enthusiastically declares:

"This is the only place in the world, where, by standing in one place, you can see a plane, a ship, a car, a bus, a taxi, a truck, a helicopter and a pedestrian at the same time."

He adds: "And the pedestrian had best watch his step!"

grows. Every major Eastern railroad uses this great open space to receive and sort goods and to direct them to manufacturer or consumer.

NEARLY a million tons of freight move through a dozen major yards every week. Something like 10,000 freight cars—that would be one train nearly as long as the entire New Jersey Turnpike—are sorted and cleared through those yards on a busy day.

These yards, heart of the vast artery of Eastern freight shipment, first blossomed amid the salt hay in the early 1880s, when the Erie Railroad began dumping fill as the base for



"Sea-Land" operation at Pan-Atlantic Steamship Corp.'s Port Newark dock. Boxes are lifted, sealed, directly off trailer and put aboard ship, to be taken to another carrier at port of destination. Operation speeds service, reduces pilferage.

Croton Yard on swampland a mile east of Snake Hill. Today an "island" 1½ miles long and wide enough for 112 tracks rises triumphantly above the bogs.

Soon after, the Pennsylvania started its Meadows Yard, the sprawling freight car parking lot and sorting center beside the Lackawanna and Hudson & Manhattan tracks in Kearny. Here, over a 70-year period, the Pennsy has built facilities capable of handling or storing 7,000 cars at once.

Railroad switching and classifying installations are elsewhere—the Lackawanna's yards are just north of Snake Hill; the Susquehanna and West Shore yards are side by side at Ridgefield; the Jersey Central's yards are at Elizabethport, and the Lehigh Valley's massive Oak Island yard is only slightly more than a half mile north of Port Newark.

Oak Island, last of the major yards to be built, illustrates well the problems of railroad construction in the

meadows. Two full years of toil preceded the formal opening July 1, 1927. First, 254,000 cubic yards of base fill were pumped in from Newark Bay. Then, for 18 months, 30 freight cars worked in constant shuttle between Oak Island and three Pennsylvania dirt pits to bring in 5,894,147 cubic yards of fill—enough to raise an "island" 21 feet above the marshes.

Every year some 30 to 40 million tons of freight move through the meadows railroad installations (during World War II that figure reached peaks of 150 million tons a year). If all of that wartime freight had been butter in one-pound packages, the volume handled in the meadows in 1944 would have made nearly 15 million stacks of butter—each stack one mile tall.

It wasn't butter. There was, and is, no single-mindedness in railroad freight. Everything—guitar strings,

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MEADOWLAND MOVEMENT

Garden State Truck Terminal, largest such facility in the world (right and below), is set in "dream" location: center of Newark's Down Neck industrial area; next to Rt. 1-9; less than half mile from N. J. Turnpike, and only mile from busy Port Newark.



Newark Airport, which occupies 2,300 acres of meadows. Eleven scheduled airlines last year

carried 2,600,000 passengers, 85 million pounds of freight, and some 16 million pounds of mail.

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perfume, automobiles, linoleum, toys, Army tanks, books, high-octane gas, coal, mosaic tile, food, giant machines, safety pins, everything — makes up those freight trains. Huge volumes of fruit clear through Croxton Yard, and the Pennsylvania in season unloads thousands of cars of watermelons in the Meadows Yard.

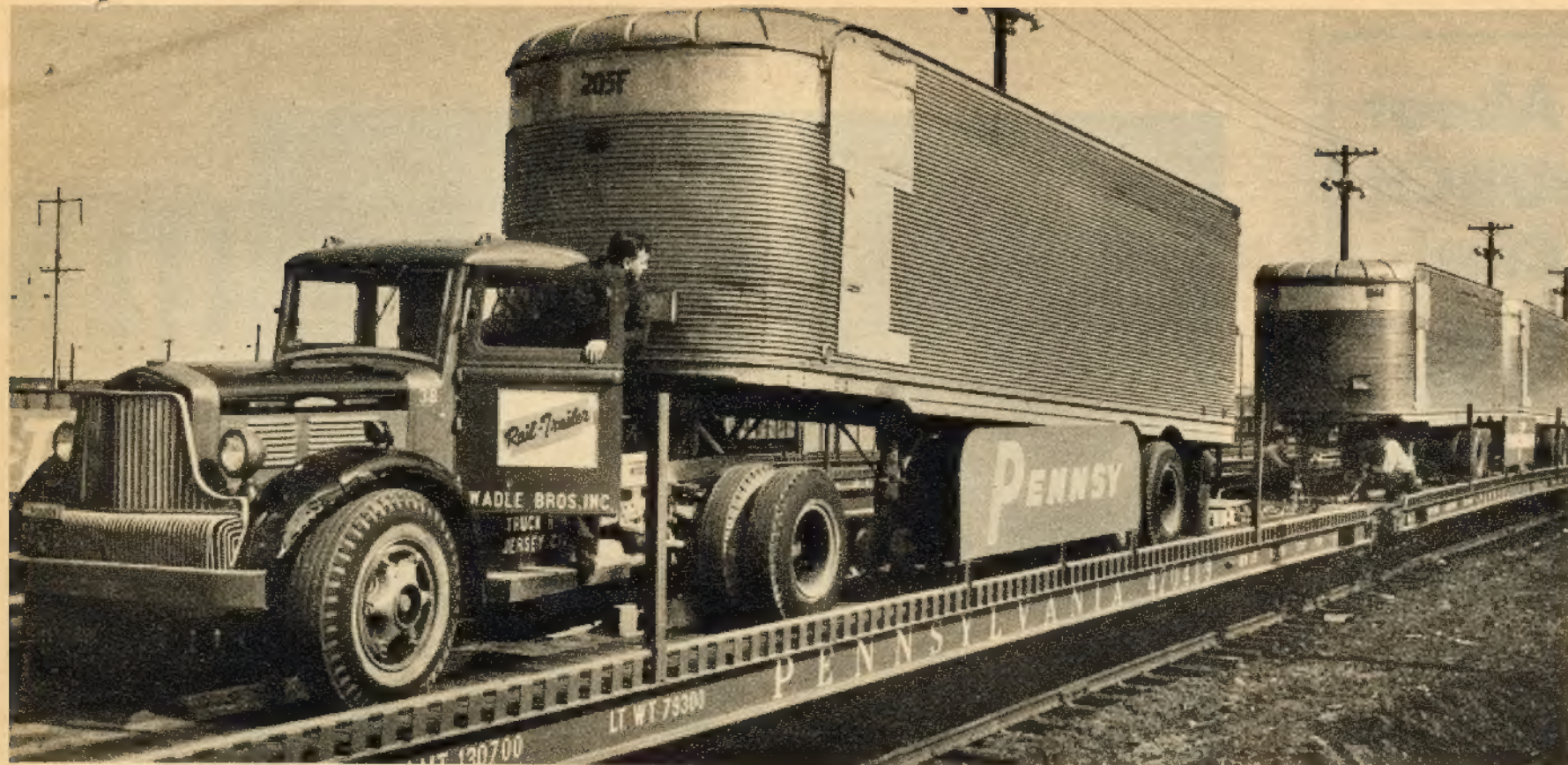
Concentration on a method of freight hauling that has served nobly for a century could obscure the really big story of transportation in the meadows: The incredible rise of truck traffic out there in the past decade. Coupled with this is the building of new major truck terminals, to do virtually the same job that railroad yards do.

NO ONE, including the truckers' own association, stands ready to delineate exactly how much traffic is handled through these terminals (or, for that matter, to say how many terminals there are). That leaves statistical gathering to out-of-the-windshield surveys by a reporter wandering through the meadows.

This admittedly unscientific survey indicates that there are at least 50 well-established truck enterprises in the area. Each of these clears a minimum of 25 to 30 trucks each day. That's something like 1,200 to 1,500 loaded, 40-foot truck-trailers originating in major meadows terminals every 24 hours.

Add to the major truck yards the little fellows, operators with one or two trucks. No searching eye is necessary to spot these on or around the meadows—clustered on side roads, on small corner upland lots or beside small industrial sites. Then, of course, add meadowland industry's own trucks, operated independently of terminals.

How many truck loads of freight originate in the meadows, then? Say 3,000 daily to be conservative—and remember that for each full truck rolling out a full truck rolls in. Recent statistics reveal that at least 60,000 trucks cross the meadows daily, most of those moving directly to destination without stopping.



Railroads and trucks, often competitors, sometimes cooperate, as in this Truc-Train operation at Pennsylvania Railroad's Terminal in Kearny. Since 1955 trailers have been riding flat cars "piggyback" style on long hauls.

The impact of trucks on all meadowland roads is clear. Ask the man who rides Rts. 3 or 17 in late afternoon, or better yet, get caught yourself some night between 5 and 6 o'clock in the truck lanes winding through the road labyrinth beneath Pulaski Skyway. It's enough to make even a truck driver blanch.

STRONG feelings about trucks, pro or con, really are long since beside the point: Trucking in the meadowland is a major enterprise, and it is getting bigger all the time. Trucks are in the area for exactly the same reason as the railroads—room to work.

Truck terminals are big business. A visit to the Garden State Truck Terminal, the largest such facility in the world, can help change the mind of a dissenter.

The location is a truckman's dream. Set in the midst of Newark's Down Neck industrial area, Garden State is adjacent to Rt. 1-9, less than a half mile from the New Jersey Turnpike entrance and exit at Newark Airport and about a mile from Port Newark.

This impressive terminal has room for 160 trucks at once, all under cover. Modern dispatching and freight-handling methods speed handling of cargo, whether it be penny candy in one-pound lots or heavy machinery by the ton. Six carriers, or companies, leased the building in 1953 to carry on their program of consolidating truck freight.

THE idea is to get any given item from shipper to receiver in minimum time, thus saving warehousing costs. Incoming trucks at Garden State are unloaded, their freight sorted and quickly redistributed to outgoing carriers by means of a 2,000-foot-long conveyor system.

Garden State, as the biggest truck freight operation anywhere, is not typical of meadowland truck movements. More typical would be a concern such as Eastern Freightways in Carlstadt, with 30 "doors" or truck places.

Lou Kletter, president of Eastern,

points out why his company moved to the meadows from New York in 1953:

"We couldn't expand in the city and we needed space. The only available open land at a reasonable price was here in the meadows—close enough to New York, but far enough away to give us room to move."

Eastern is one of about 20 impor-

Time to Kill

The Jersey Meadows typify mankind's haste to leave where he was to get someplace else in a hurry. It wasn't always thus.

Walter A. Lucas in his rail-roading book, "From the Hills to the Hudson," tells of pleasant days on the meadows. Quoting an old engineer's reminiscences of the days between 1838 and 1845, Mr. Lucas writes:

"The running time between Paterson and Jersey City was one hour and frequently a longer time was consumed, as it was often the custom to bring the train to a standstill on the meadows while the passengers and crew indulged in a hunt for snapping turtles, which at that time were plentiful."

tant truck terminals in the area west of the Hackensack River between Teeterboro Airport and Paterson Plank Rd. Within a half mile of Eastern are three competitors—Helm, Arrow and Pilot, all built since 1952, and all busy.

MR. KLETTER emphasizes the need to be in open country. "We really start work here in the early evening," he explains. "Floodlights are on all night. Trucks roar when they start up and pull out. Men have to shout to be heard above the loudspeaker. This wouldn't go in a residential area."

Space is important, but whether the economics are catching up is another matter. Meadow land which cost \$3,000 an acre in 1952 now brings as much as \$15,000 an acre, Mr. Kletter says.

The railroad-truck competition is not really open warfare yet, although

the potential for such conflict is there if ever freight volume declines. At the moment, though, there is evident cooperation in many areas. Railroad sidings run into several of the truck terminals, for one thing, but nowhere is the cooperation more evident than in the Pennsylvania Railroad's "Truc-Train" development in its Meadows Yard.

Following the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" philosophy, the Pennsylvania since March 1955 has been loading truck trailers atop freight cars and moving them over the rails. This "piggyback" operation, so simple and so logical, leads to wonder that similar setups aren't used more widely for long hauls. A tractor-trailer combination simply backs up, pushes the trailer on a flat car and off it goes. At the other end the process is reversed.

EACH day three "Truc-Trains" go westward from the Meadows Yard and each day three trains arrive from the West. Each train averages 30 to 40 flat cars, two trailers to a flat car. Six trains, 60 to 80 trailers per train, mean 360 to 480 trailers not clogging the highways.

Imaginative integration of transportation media reached its peak in the Pan-Atlantic Steamship Corp.'s "Sea-Land Service" at Port Newark. Simply stated, this is how it works: Loaded trucks are hauled from shipper's door to dockside, placed aboard ships, carried to far-off ports and unloaded for trucking to receiver—with doors never unsealed to tempt dockside pilferers.

Pan-Atlantic's "boxes" (the trucker's term for trailers) can be seen neatly stacked on the north side of the port. More than 4,000 of the specially built trailers are used in the service; each of those trailers fits neatly into the holds or on the decks of six ships plying weekly between Houston, Puerto Rico and a third run which includes Miami, New Orleans and Tampa.

"Sea-Land" has operated since October 1957, and, if its success is any indication, seems to delight shippers who take kindly to the notion of

sealed trailer movements. Each ship leaving or arriving carries 226 trailers aboard, including refrigerated or heated "boxes" for perishables.

The casual observer of freight movements in the meadows feels that most imagination is spent on moving things rather than people. Railroad tracks constantly cross and recross in that open area, yet no one ever has been able to get the railroads to agree to passenger car interchanges.

MANY have tried. There is a history of at least 30 years of efforts, either to interchange equipment in the meadows or to use the area for a continuous "loop" into and out of New York to serve the harassed commuter. It would seem that if the commuter problem is to be solved, the solution probably will be solved in a joint rail-bus-automobile effort in the meadows.

Actually, a rapid-transit loop in the meadows probably has importance for the future far above the mere commuter (put upon though he may feel). The fact is that complete, intelligent meadowland reclamation may fall completely apart without some form of mass movement.

Consider a report by Roland Wank in a paper prepared for the Meadowlands Regional Planning Board.

Mr. Wank, an engineer, at the time was thinking only of the 7,000 to 8,000 acres under the board's jurisdiction in Carlstadt, East Rutherford, Rutherford, Lyndhurst and North Arlington. He estimated that full industrial development of that area alone would mean about 125,000 vehicles at peak traffic loads.

This is the incredible part: Mr. Wank said 124 traffic lanes, or 31 four-lane highways, would have to be built to handle the automobiles! He didn't go into the traffic circles, links with other highways and all the other needs of modern highway traffic—nor did he extend his study to the rest of the unreclaimed meadowland, which is about twice the size of the area he was contemplating.

Anyone for mass movement?

(Next Week: The "Forgotten" Meadows)